VERSES,

Occaſion'd by the Sight of a

CHAMERA OBSCURA.

In nova fert Animus mutatas dicere formas
Corpora. ——

LONDON:

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BRITISH MUSEUM

CHAMBERA OBSCURA.

VERSES.

ON THE

CHAMERA OBSCURA.

SAY, rare Machine, who taught thee to deſign?
And mimick Nature with ſuch Skill divine?
The Miracles of whoſe creative Glaſs,
Struck with Amaze, the ſuperſtitious Claſs,
Of Fools, in * Bacon's Days, and did for Witchcraft paſs;
Productions ſtrange! weak Reaſon did tranſcend;
And all admir'd, but few could comprehend;
The Cauſe conceal'd; th' Effect Men plain perceive;
Compell'd by Sight thy Myſt'ries to believe.

Come; lead us to thy Chamber; there unfold
Thy ſecret Charms, delightful to behold;

* Friar *Bacon*, who for his Skill in Optics, and other Arts, was tried for a Conjurer.

How little is thy Cell? How dark the Room?
Diſcloſe thine Eye-lid, and diſpel this Gloom!
That radiant Orb reveal'd, ſmooth, pure, polite;
In darts a ſudden Blaze of beaming Light,
And ſtains the clear white Sheet, with Colours ſtrong and bright;
Exterior Objects painting on the Scroll,
True as the Eye preſents 'em to the Soul;
A new Creation! deckt with ev'ry Grace!
Form'd by thy Pencil, in a Moment's Space!
As in a Nutſhell, curious to behold;
Great HOMER's ILIAD was inſcrib'd of old;
So the wide World's vaſt Volume, here, we ſee
To Miniature reduc'd, and juſt Epitome:

Each wondrous Work of thine excites Surprize;
And, as at Court ſome fall, when others riſe;

So, if thy magick Pow'r thou deign to ſhew;
The High are humbled, and advanc'd the Low;
Thoſe, who to ~~Seats~~ *Rank* of worthieſt Place aſpire,
And Right-hand Honours as their Due require;
Thou to the Left conſigns; — (foretold their Doom,
In ſacred Writ;) — and others take their Room.
Inſtructive Glaſs! here human Pride may trace,
Diminiſh'd Grandeur, and inverted Place:
How like to Thine, are fickle Fortune's Ways?
Delighting to tranſpoſe, depreſs, and raiſe;
O! couldſt thou ſhew ſuch Influence on my Lay!
Whilſt I thy various Properties diſplay;
And lift to loftier Heights my Genius low;
That equal to my Theme my Verſe might flow;
Then, wou'd I paint great Nature's Works and Thine,
In laſting Characters, and each ſtrong Line,
Shou'd juſtly repreſent the Archetype divine.

Now

Now tow'rds that Garden ſpread the Paper Screen;
What inſtantaneous Beauties gild the Scene?
The Chryſtal Fountains, and the fine Caſkade;
The living Statues, and green Arbour's Shade;
The painted Hollies, and the ſmooth-ſhorn Yew;
The Lillies lovely white, and Iris blue!
The gaudy Tulips; and the bluſhing Roſe,
With each gay Flow'r that on the Margin glows;
Array'd in all their native glorious Dyes;
Waving their Tops, as the ſoft Zephyrs riſe:

Or, ſhou'd the rich Autumnal Seaſon ſuit;
The Print preſents us with all kinds of Fruit;
The red-ripe Cherry, and the Sun-burnt Peach;
And purple Grape, hang here within our Reach;
Of Mulb'ries plenteous ſtore on thoſe fair Trees,
In Cluſters, court the Hand their Load to eaſe;

That

That looſe Branch ſhakes, by Winds rent from the Wall,
Down drop the Plumbs; ſee! catch 'em in their Fall.

How wou'd that Painter boaſt his Pencil's Art?
Who cou'd ſuch Motions to his Piece impart?
But, here, thou haſt no Rival in thy Fame;
'Tis thine alone to copy Nature's Frame,
So ſtrictly true, ſhe ſeems the very ſame;
In juſt Proportions; Colours ſtrong or faint;
By Light and Shade; without the Daub of Paint:
To animate the Picture, and inſpire,
Sueh Motions, as the Figures may require,
From Heav'n, Prometheus like, thou ſteal'ſt the ſacred Fire.

Again, the blank unſullied Scheme diſplay;
Earth, Ocean, Air and Sky, thy Call obey.
Their num'rous Charms the various Beings blend;
As far and wide the Landſkip does extend;

Freſh Wonders entertain our raviſh'd Sight;
The Change of Scene affords us new Delight:
See! diſtant Hills advance above the Sky,
Whoſe Tops below the lifted Vallies lie;
There lowing Herds in the rich Paſtures graze;
The fleecy Flock, here, from the Shepherd ſtrays.

Poor tim'rous Hare! how ſwift along the Plain
Thou darts thy Flight; thy Flight, alas! is vain;
Inſpir'd by ſound of Horn, and Cries of Hounds,
O'er the high Fence the gen'rous Courſer bounds;
The Huntſman, Horſes, Dogs, purſue the Chaſe,
With eager Speed and fierce tumultuous Race;
Decreed thy Death, nor can thy Doublings ſave;
They ſeize their Prey, and drag thee to thy Grave.

See yonder Cottage its new Height admire,
Uprais'd above the Steeple's lofty Spire;

Now ſmile the fruitful Fields of ripen'd Corn,
Whoſe golden Plenty does the Print adorn;
How the Clown ſtares! ſmit with Surprize and Love,
To ſee th' inverted pretty Milk-Maid move,
With Pail beneath her Head, and Feet above;
While ſwift his Windmill whirls its giddy Sail,
This Way and that, obedient to the Gale:

Near the thick Copſe, the dazling Meteor's Blaze
Dances the ſwampy Green, in giddy Maze;
Avoid the Path, ye ſimple Hines, nor tread
The dang'rous Track: bewilder'd and miſled,
The loneſome Trav'ler, oft, at dark Midnight
Purſues, with pleaſing Hopes, the wandring Light;
Too late repents; miſguided by the Flame,
Thro' miry Bogs, wet Marſh, and muddy Stream;

O'er Hedge and Buſh; 'midſt Briars, Thorns and Brakes,
Such dreary Ways the Jack-o-Lanthorn takes,
Then plung'd in Pond, or Ditch, the drowning Wretch forſakes.

So warn'd; beware falſe Lights, that lead aſtray,
And tempt your Feet to quit the good old Way;
By ſafer Courſe to guide you they pretend
To Heav'n, while headlong down to Hell they tend.

The Kyte and Lanthorn mounting from that Plain,
Aloft in Air, diſpread a ſhining Train;
Which like a falling Star, in dead of Night,
With long continued Trail of ſtreaming Light,
Deſcends a-down the Chart;—ſome Truant Boy's Delight.

Conceal'd by yon' tall topſey-turvey Trees,
Whoſe bending Branches anſwer to the Breeze;

We juſt diſcern ſome Nobleman's fair Seat;
How happy to enjoy ſuch bleſt Retreat,
If Happineſs wou'd deign to dwell among the Great!
Here croſs the Landſkip Ravens wing their Flight;
There ſkulks the Screech Owl, hideous Bird of Night;
Theſe pretty Songſters hop from Spray to Spray,
And with ſweet Notes ſalute the dawning Day;
While tow'ring Larks, attempting high to ſoar,
With downward Pinions nether Skies explore;
Birds in full Flocks forſake our Hemiſphere,
Purſue their deſtin'd Voy'ge in the Mid Air;
And, quite beyond our Ken, to diſtant Climes repair.

What Firmament? which we from far deſcry,
Whoſe azure Surface elevated high,
And wide extended, ſeems another Sky;
The vaſt unbounded Ocean's level Green!
Now, undiſturb'd by Winds, calm, ſmooth, ſerene.

O Sight magnificent! O beauteous Train!
A moving Grove floats on the wat'ry Plain,
And with approaching Glories decks the ſhining Main.
A gallant Fleet! Great BRITAIN's boaſted Pride,
And ſureſt Safeguard! with what State they ride,
And preſs the Boſom of the ſwelling Tide;
The painted Streamers dancing to and fro,
Set ev'ry Sail to court all Winds that blow;
The Sun Beams with reflected Luſtre play
On the bright Surface of the glaſſy Way,
So ſtill the peaceful Deep! So ſoft the Gale!
Who in thoſe Gallies wou'd not wiſh to ſail?

Ah! truſt no Summer's Sea, nor Harlot's Smile,
With ſweet Deceit, and flatt'ring Joys, a while
They 'lure; then, faithleſs, ruin thoſe they once beguile:

Witneſs the Warning-piece before our Eyes!
Loſe there! th' Horizon low'rs; black Clouds ariſe,
With Darkneſs, thick as Night, inveloping the Skies.
Bleſs us! what quick, fierce Fires the Lightnings dart?
The livid Blaze illumes the gleaming Chart;
Hark! the loud Tempeſt roars, the Thunders roll,
And rat'ling Vollies rend the tott'ring Pole,
Yet cannot ſhake the tranquil Mind and ſtedfaſt Soul:
Againſt the Rocks thoſe raging Billows daſh;
That flying Foam ſeems ſome bright Lightning's Flaſh;

How are the Glories of our Glaſs defac'd!
The Room obſcur'd; the Picture quite eras'd;
Obliterated All!

Now mourn the ſhatter'd Fleet, to Pieces torn;
The wretched Seamen on the Surges born,
Become the Mock of Winds, and cruel Tempeſt's Scorn:
What Heart obdurate the ſad Shock can bear
Without a ſolemn Sigh, and plenteous Tear?
When will this dreadful Hurricane have End?
Kind Heav'n ſome Friendly Ray of Comfort ſend;
Thy heavy Judgments do not always laſt,
Pity ſucceeds when Puniſhment is paſt:

See! while I ſpeak, a glimm'ring Light ariſe,
And the gay Bow bedeck the milder Skies;
Its Arch contracted, and revers'd its Horns,
Like the fair Moon, when new, the Chart adorns;
The Waves ſubſide, the boiſt'rous Winds decreaſe,
The troubled Motions of the Waters ceaſe,
A ſettled Calm enſues, and all is Peace:

Enough!

Enough! now ope' the Door! See Sol's bright Ray
Breaks in, the ſickning Figures faint away,
And all their Beauties fade, ſunk in the Flood of Day;
So ſhine the Starry Train, and Planets bright,
With peerleſs Luſtre, all the darkſome Night,
But vaniſh at the ſplendent Sun's approaching Light.

FINIS.

JOHN CUFF,

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